

READER'S DIGEST
JUNE 1983ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 31

Behind the Line

THE KGB OFFICER was waiting for him when John Barron, delayed in traffic, arrived at home on a dark, rainy night in November 1979. Stanislav Levchenko rose as Barron entered the room, and for a moment the two stood, assessing each other. "We are proud that you are among us," Barron said, in Russian.

Sitting by the fire, Barron, a Reader's Digest Senior Editor, and Levchenko, who had defected from the KGB in Tokyo, began to develop what was to be a deep friendship. Intrigued by Barron's collection of recorded music, Levchenko asked to hear, again and again "Plaisir d'Amour" and "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." Barron, who had once served with U.S. Naval Intelligence and who was author of a major book on the KGB, spoke expertly with Levchenko about the life he had escaped less than a month before. At one point, about 2 a.m., Levchenko took a copy of Barron's 1974 book on the KGB from a shelf, turned to a favorite passage and read aloud.

The book, which had prompted Levchenko to contact Barron, was out of print. Because of a continuing demand, Barron had considered updating and republishing it. Now, here in his home, speaking

gravely and urgently, was the KGB specialist in Active Measures to flee to the West. Levchenko knew intimately the KGB's expanding campaign to influence and co-opt diplomats, journalists, politicians and organizations everywhere. And its Tokyo Residency, where Levchenko had practiced these Active Measures, was among the four or five most important in the world.

Levchenko became the impetus for an entirely new book, laying bare hitherto hidden recesses of the Soviet security and espionage apparatus. *KGB Today: The Hidden Hand*, published by Reader's Digest Press, devotes three chapters to Levchenko's story. These are condensed in this issue (see page 123).

But Levchenko's inside knowledge as a KGB major—his ability to spot a KGB officer behind a diplomatic charade, his familiarity with ways and means of stealing high technology from the West—gave Barron a fresh perspective on a subject he already knew well.

Barron, whose tenacity as an investigative reporter had won him many awards, worked for 30 months at this new task. With the worldwide resources of *The Digest*, particularly the interview and research skills of Associate Editor G. Will-

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